How do the building codes impact your individual safety, and how do those codes impact the safety of your community collectively?

Building codes are a set of rules, dictating the specification of construction of homes, schools, and workplaces. Their purpose is to ensure public safety, health, and welfare as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures. Building codes protect the lives of individuals and when building codes are not adhered to on a larger scale, it impacts the public health and happiness of a community. Because building codes can change over time or may be violated altogether, many alarming scenarios can result from this.

Breathing deeply, the young man smells smoke. He quickly goes over to the bedroom door and sees smoke drifting from underneath the door into the room. He checks the door and tests the knob which is red-hot. He determines that he cannot escape out into the hallway. He turns around and sees the window, raises it, climbs out, and jumps quickly to the ground. Many would credit his critical thinking in an emergency, but it is the building code that ensures that the minimum size of at least one window in each bedroom that is large enough for a person to escape out of it in an emergency that saves the day. ***Building codes*** save lives.

Under the balcony, she peers up to see someone leaning against the balcony railing. She waves and as the guest leans forward against the railing, it suddenly gives way. Afterwards, it is determined that the balcony is older and out-of-date with current building codes. Newer building codes make certain that railings on balconies and stairs are the correct height, configuration, and strength to prevent someone from falling over it when people are standing near the edge. ***Building codes*** save lives.

In an instant, the hurricane was upon the family. They were gathered inside their home, waiting out the harsh winds and gale-like storm. After several hours, the storm had passed, and they surveyed the damage. Their home had some minor damage, but the basic structure was intact. Thanks to building codes, the strength of the walls, the floor and the framing of the roof were built to withstand the specific weather conditions in the area such as wind, snow, and tropical storms. ***Building codes*** save lives.

Leaving the house, the mother slowly lowered the garage door from inside her car, backing out of the driveway. A small child races through the garage from the house, speeding to catch up to his mother in the car. He is oblivious to the lowering of the garage door which is only a few feet from completely closing. An automatic safety device activates, and the garage door begins to travel upwards again. The child is safe, and once again, a building code that specifies that three different safety devices be installed to make sure that a child is not trapped under a closing garage door prevents the child from being crushed. ***Building codes*** save lives.

Designing a new family room in the basement, the contractor examinines the existing electrical work in the home. Several problems are found where wires were spliced together without a junction box, ground-fault circuit interrupters were missing, and the wrong size circuits were being used. All of these scenarios could lead to an electrical fire and needed to be corrected immediately. Botched electrical

work can lead to some life-threatening scenarios, and adhering to electrical building codes reduce that risk. ***Building codes*** save lives.

In the middle of a dream, she opens her eyes to the beeping of a device at 3:00 in the morning. She registers that it is the carbon monoxide detector and rounds up the rest of the family to leave the house. She calls emergency personnel who determine that the house does indeed have a carbon monoxide leak. Because of building codes that determined the location and type of carbon monoxide and smoke detectors needed in the home, the family was able to have enough time to exit the building safely. ***Building codes*** save lives.

Needing a fence to create privacy in the backyard, one neighbor ignored the building codes and built the fence a little too high. It exceeded the building code which sets a certain height restriction and created a safety hazard. It upset the next-door neighbor, and they were ordered to take the fence down in order to comply with the building codes. Unintentionally creating bad relations among the neighbors for years to come, they were forced to "mend fences" with their community. ***Building codes save lives.***

Graduating was a cause for celebration, and fifty-some students were crowding onto the second-level deck of a family home. In a moment, the happy laughter was replaced by frantic screams as the deck started to collapse! People were transported to the hospital, and the site was inspected for the cause of the destruction. It seemed that the connection between the building and the deck had failed. There were several causes including using hangers that were too small for the joists, not enough flashing that enabled the ledger to rot, and improper fastening. If the construction of the deck had been properly done, adhering to the building codes, the deck would not have collapsed. ***Building codes save lives.***

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